



West Africa Regional Economic Bulletin | March 2022

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

As we recognize March as Women's History month, we kick off this edition highlighting the achievements of female eco-guardians serving as guardians of West Africa's most crucial landscapes. Additionally, we are pleased to share updates on activities across the sub-region that conserve biodiversity, promote WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), support the power and energy sector, and harness efforts that bolster agriculture, while improving the lives of farmers through increased productivity.

We hope you find this edition helpful and informative.

Sincerely,

Rockfeler Herisse, PhD

Acting Office Director

USAID/West Africa | Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO)

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Guardians of the Forest: Female Community Eco-Guards Working to Conserve Biodiversity



*A female eco-guard educating some members of the community.
Photo credit: WABiLED*

As part of International Women's Day, the [West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development](#) (WABiLED) program hosted a podcast focused on female community eco-guards working together to protect the Grebo-Krahn National Park in Liberia. The eco-guards raise awareness on the perils of illegal hunting and deforestation, and collect data on wildlife and illegal human activities in the forest, while reforming the community and changing mindsets.

The Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF), a former grantee of the [West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change](#) (WABiCC) program, has been working to conserve what is left of the Grebo-Krahn National Park in Liberia and reverse the damage to the park. The Park, which is a crucial landscape of West Africa's Upper Guinean Forest, and home to some of the region's most precious species such as the forest elephant and the western chimpanzee, has been reduced to only a fraction of its size, having lost several thousand hectares of forest between 2001 and 2014.

WCF is raising awareness and helping members of the community, especially women and youth, to improve and diversify their livelihoods in a way that conserves the forest and generates income for the community. One of the alternative livelihood avenues for women is the training of female community eco-guards. The eco-guards share the findings from

their patrols with the Forestry Development Authority of Liberia. The engagement provides the eco-guards with financial security, and they appealed to the WCF to increase funding to the program, so they can contribute to their families and change their status in the community.

For more information on the activities of the eco-guards, follow [this link](#) or listen to the panelists on the [podcast](#).

USAID Trade Hub Awards \$21 Million in Co-investment Grants to 28 Companies



African Guarantee Fund brainstorming session. Photo credit: WATIH

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH), awarded approximately \$21 million in co-investment grants to 28 companies in the last four months, bringing the total number of co-investment partners to 71. The grants, ranging from \$250,000 to \$2 million, were made possible through USAID Missions within the region, with dedicated funding from [Prosper Africa](#) and [Feed the Future](#). These co-investment partnerships cut across 10 West African countries—Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Cape Verde, and Togo.

The projects developed through these Trade Hub partnerships will contribute significantly to economic growth in West Africa, by creating jobs, boosting incomes for people working in dozens of industries, and increasing U.S. exports of products sourced from or made in the region. The areas of focus include water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), agriculture, financial services, and apparel.

[Discover more](#) on the new partnerships and how WATIH is contributing significantly to economic growth in West Africa.

World Water Day: MuniWASH Discusses Solutions to Water Crisis



*A household benefits from the Ministry of Hydraulics' project "Accès à l'eau pour Tous APTF".
Photo credit: MuniWASH*

As a prelude to World Water Day on March 22, 2022, the USAID-funded Municipal Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (MuniWASH) project organized a panel discussion with its network of journalists specialized in reporting on water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH-JnCI), in Abidjan. The discussion was on guaranteeing quality water for households in urban areas.

This activity brought together stakeholders in the water sector to analyze the challenges of the sector and share best practices in improving access to water in urban areas for the benefit of households particularly the poor and underserved. The discussion also provided journalists with news content for reports in their various media outlets on World Water Day, while helping MuniWASH to raise mass awareness on measures to mitigate the water crisis.

Five professionals from the water and sanitation sector, representing the Ministry of Hydraulics, the African Water Association, the National Office of Drinking Water, the Global Water Partnership - Côte d'Ivoire Office, and a representative of a municipality invited by the MuniWASH activity, formed the panel.

The celebration of World Water Day coincided with the organization of the World Water Forum in Dakar from March 21 to 26. World Water Day, celebrated every March 22, was established by the United Nations to highlight the importance of water and support efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6: clean water and sanitation for all by 2030.

First-Ever Solar Mini-Grid Plant Powers Up in The Gambia



*Off grid containerized mini grid.
Photo Credit: Power Africa*

USAID and Power Africa worked with the Government of The Gambia and the private sector to launch the country's first solar green mini-grid plant located at Nyamanarr in the Upper River Region of The Gambia. It represents an important cost-effective step in diversifying energy supply in the ECOWAS region, particularly in the rural and peri-urban areas, where only eight percent of the population have access to electricity, mainly due to the difficulty in accessing the national electrical grids.

The project, financed under the ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) with support from USAID Power Africa, involved the design, supply, installation and commissioning of a 120.6 kW solar PV off grid containerized mini grid with battery storage, grid interface, and remote monitoring systems. It also involved installing the generation equipment, building the required distribution network, and supplying 200 smart meters for households in Nyamanarr, as well as conducting in-door wiring in households.

This effort will provide electricity access to more than 4,000 residents in the Nyamanarr community who have not had access to any modern energy services for more than a century. This innovative solution will provide access to electricity for the community to support productive activities and enable the community to move up the socio-economic development ladder. With electricity in the village, youth can stay and work in the village, internet facilities with hotspots will be set-up for both educational and leisure purposes, children can study at night, new businesses will grow, and existing enterprises can expand. [Read more.](#)

Feed the Future Training Increases Peanut Yields in Senegal



A Peanut farm in Senegal.

Photo credit: IFDC

The Feed the Future Enhancing Growth through Regional Agriculture Input Systems (EnGRAIS) project for West Africa, in cooperation with the Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) program, developed the Fertilizer and Seed Recommendations Map for West Africa and the Agro Input Packages ([FeSeRWAM/AIP](#)). The map is an online tool, with funding from USAID, that can help farmers in the region access the right recommendations on appropriate fertilizer blends, improved seed varieties, and good agricultural practices to increase their yields and improve their livelihoods.

At a regional training of trainer's workshop co-organized by EnGRAIS and PAIRED in Abidjan on the FeSeRWAM/AIP, Mr. Josias Toviho, an agronomist at ICS-INDORAMA Senegal, producers of DAP and NPK fertilizers, made a discovery on resolving calcium and sulfur deficiency in the production of peanuts.

Following the new knowledge, ICS-INDORAMA carried out trials in the main peanut cropping zones in Senegal, especially the Southern groundnut basin, in partnership with the National Agricultural Extension and Advisory Agency (ANCAR). Peanut production is a very important agricultural activity in Senegal, covering over 50 percent of the country's cultivated land. The trials capitalized on gypsum's efficacy on the peanut crop, being a good source of secondary elements including calcium and sulfur, which promote nodule formation on legumes and development of nut in peanuts, thus increasing yields by about 200kg per hectare.

The recommendations of the innovative FeSeRWAM and AIP are game changers in increasing production and productivity in the regional agriculture space; and ultimately, helping to improve livelihoods of the farmers.

Trade Hub-led Webinar Introduces “Plan Bee” for Supporting Smallholder Farmers



From Farm to Beehive Webinar Screenshot.

Photo credit: WATiH

On February 24, the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATiH) in conjunction with the West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development project (WABiLED) and the Global Shea Alliance (GSA), a USAID partner, co-hosted a webinar, “From Farm to Beehive: Why Introducing Farmers to Beekeeping is a Win for Farmers, Agribusinesses and the Environment.”

One hundred and ninety-six people participated in the three-hour webinar, which explored ways that agribusinesses, non-governmental organizations, and beekeeping experts could support West African farmers to build economic resilience by producing honey and beeswax through beekeeping initiatives. This will also serve as an additional source of income and an off-season income-generating activity.

Expert presentations illuminated the ecological and economic benefits of beekeeping for smallholder farmers, while highlighting the successes of ongoing beekeeping projects. The webinar brought together stakeholders from across West Africa, North America, and Europe, who learned invaluable insights geared toward farmers and leaders of agribusinesses and non-governmental organizations, and engaged robustly with the team of seasoned experts. Watch the full webinar [here](#).

Global Mamas Moves to Centralized, Eco-friendly Production Facility



Global Mamas staff stretching before their orientation at the Fair Trade Zone facility.

Photo credit: Global Mamas

[Global Mamas](#), a Trade Hub co-investment partner since February 2021, funded through the [Prosper Africa](#) initiative, supported by USAID, now has a centralized, eco-friendly production facility that allows for sustainable manufacturing processes of its handcrafted products. The facility, called the Fair Trade Zone (FTZ), was built so the Ghana-based social enterprise could merge its two locations: Akuse and Odumase Krobo, under one roof. The FTZ is located near Kpong in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Between December and January 2021, Global Mamas also hosted a series of gender equity training workshops, with 401 participants trained in total. These participants included producers and staff of the Global Mamas network, as well as their family members. The focus was on the importance of empowering women in the workplace, as well as in their homes and communities.

Global Mamas have also been busy improving and increasing their product lines, developing three new packaging products: including a paper box for packaging soap, a gift bag, and a series of envelopes, all crafted from dried water hyacinth (an invasive weed found in waterways). Global Mamas has also begun the development of skincare products, including a series of all-natural shea soaps and shea butters.

Power Africa Supports Strengthening of West Africa's Interconnected Networks



A map of the Northcore Transmission network.

Photo credit: Power Africa

The West African Power Pool (WAPP), with support from [Power Africa](#), has begun its first interconnection project, the Northcore Transmission network.

The North Core 62km project runs from Nigeria to Niger and forms part of WAPP's five priority interconnection projects which will contribute to 875km long transmission lines, connecting power systems in Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso. This transmission line will enable power flow and accelerate cross-border electricity trade amongst the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member countries. It will also enable the expansion of rural electrification, particularly in Niger and Burkina Faso.

Power Africa also supported WAPP to conduct four system-wide studies aimed at ultimately optimizing reactive power flow in the transmission network, improving the security margin of reactive power and reducing the installation of compensation devices; and to harmonize its regional power system plan with member national power system plans using shared planning and analysis tools.

Power Africa has supported WAPP since 2020 to strengthen its capacity to be fully established as a regional electricity market. With the growing opportunities to enhance electricity flow in West Africa through interconnected networks, the WAPP holds the potential to serve as a regional electricity market. One key aspect of this support to WAPP is to identify and address the bottlenecks that hamper timely implementation/completion of the five-high priority WAPP interconnection projects.

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